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Children's center named for Solis

Araceli Esparza, Staff Writer

EL MONTE

Congresswoman Hilda Solis, D-El Monte, has many fond memories of her school days.

"When I was a child, we didn't have Head Start and preschool, but I remember kindergarten," Solis told Mountain View School District and city officials Thursday. "I would get up early just to fix my hair and get dressed. I loved school, and I had dreams of going to college."

Solis was commended by the district on Thursday for her dedication to and enthusiasm for education --and, in particular, for pre-kindergarten programs.

The district lauded Solis by renaming its Head Start/State Preschool Children's Center, at 2109 Burkett Road, in her honor. It's now the Mountain View School District Hilda Solis Head Start/State Preschool Children's Center.

"She's a great advocate for preschool education and has been a great supporter of children and families," Michelle Earle, public information officer for the district, said. "She tries to work a lot of legislation on behalf of our district and gets the word out."

Solis' recent commendation was spearheaded by the district's school board and was supported by El Monte and South El Monte city officials, said district Superintendent Gary Rapkin.

The superintendent added that Solis was "really pleased and humbled" when she learned of the honor three months ago.

Rapkin described Solis as the ideal candidate to represent early-education programs, where "this is the first step toward college" for children.

"Head Start and our preschool is a direct connection as to what we're about, and she knows how important that program is to the Mountain View community," Rapkin said of Solis. "Throughout her career, she has said yes' to children."

An estimated 300 students are enrolled throughout the district's seven Head Start campuses. The program -- which has been around for 31 years -- currently entails Head Start, state preschool, children's center and Five Five curricula, said site supervisor

Georgia Hernandez.

"Education is valuable for even the smallest of minds," Solis said. "We have to do more to fortify education and make sure that every child has a chance to go to head start or preschool education."

Head Start begins children on a path that hopefully leads them to a college education, Rapkin said.

"As adults, [we] have to create the environment and culture, provide safe and clean places to be ... to say to them, We believe in you,' " he said.

Solis concurred with the superintendent, adding that parents are just as influential for children as early education programs.

"At the end of the day," she said, "that's what leaves the mark -- parents."

-- Araceli Esparza can be reached at [626] 962-8811, Ext. 2303, or by e-mail at araceli.esparza@sgvn.com.